

Request for regional priority freight projects for National Highway Freight Program

WSDOT is requesting a regional list of priority freight projects from all Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) in Washington state for potential funding under the Federal Fiscal Years 2022-2025 National Highway Freight Program. Tribes and Local agencies such as cities, counties, and ports are encouraged to work with their MPO or RTPO to take advantage of this opportunity.

The National Highway Freight Program (NHFP) was established by Congress in the 2015 FAST Act as a federal-aid highway formula program to improve the efficient movement of freight on the National Highway Freight Network. The eligible uses of program funds include a broad array of project activities, ranging from development phase activities, construction, rehabilitation, operational improvements, or other types of surface transportation projects. Funding is also available for certain freight intermodal, freight rail, lock, dam, and marine highway projects.

Background

Per federal law, WSDOT administers the allocation of federal NHFP funds apportioned to Washington state.

Through the 2021-2023 Transportation Budget, the Washington State Legislature directed WSDOT to allocate approximately \$50 million of FFY 2022-2025 NHFP funds to eligible local freight projects (non-WSDOT projects) as referenced under project ID G2000100 in the Substitute Senate Bill 5165 Sec. 311(8)¹, and in the LEAP Transportation Document 2021-2023 biennium².

WSDOT is also required by federal law to update its freight plan and submit it to FHWA in the fall of 2022 for final approval by December 1, 2022. The freight investment plan component of the freight plan must document how the state will invest and match the FFY 2022-2025 NHFP funds. The 2022 state freight investment plan focuses on five-year investment of the NHFP funding only and is not intended to serve as a complete inventory of all freight investment needs for the state.

Project request and submittal process

WSDOT actively engaged with MPOs and RTPOs through a Technical Working Group between October and December 2021 to develop an equitable approach and process for NHFP project identification and prioritization. For FFY 2022-2025 NHFP funding consideration, WSDOT is requesting MPO/RTPOs, tribes, cities, counties and ports to collaborate and develop regional lists of priority freight projects. Specific roles and responsibilities for MPO/RTPOs, and project sponsors for project submission are described below.

MPOs and RTPOs:

- Review *project eligibility requirements and key consideration parameters for submitting the regional list of freight projects*.
- Coordinate with your area tribal governments and local jurisdiction members, including cities, counties, and ports to develop a regional list of priority NHFP projects (i.e., a short list, not ranked by order) by the deadline.
- Complete the project submittal package for your region and submit the package to WSDOT no later than March 16, 2022.

¹ <https://lawfilesexternal.wa.gov/biennium/2021-22/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/Senate/5165-S.SL.pdf>

² <http://leap.wa.gov/leap/Budget/Detail/2021/ctLEAPTransportationDocument2021-2AllProjects.pdf>

Project sponsors (tribes, cities, counties, ports):

- Review *project eligibility requirements*.
- Communicate with your MPO or RTPO as early as possible.
- Follow the regional process and timeline for project submittal identified by your MPO/RTPO.
- Submit your completed project submission form and supporting documentation to your MPO/RTPO in order to incorporate your freight project(s) into the regional list.

Key parameters for consideration when submitting a regional list of priority freight NHFP projects

- Approximately \$50 million in FFY 2022-2025 NHFP funds are available statewide for local freight projects (non-WSDOT projects), and up to 30% can be used for freight intermodal or rail projects as described under project eligibility requirements.
- A regional list of eligible, priority freight projects that meet NHFP project eligibility requirements and will be competitive for NHFP funding.
- Project readiness for FFY 2022-2025.
- Project sponsor's capability to complete and deliver the project if selected and funded, including providing the required matching funds.

Project eligibility requirements

- Public roadway, freight rail, and intermodal freight projects are eligible if they meet state and federal requirements and provide clear benefit to freight transportation. Eligible freight rail and intermodal freight projects³ include:
 - 1) Projects within the boundaries of public or private freight rail or water facilities (including ports) that provide surface transportation infrastructure necessary to facilitate direct intermodal interchange, transfer, and access into or out of a freight rail or water facility; or*
 - 2) Modernization or rehabilitation of a lock and dam, or on a marine highway corridor, connector, or crossing designated by the USDOT Secretary under section 55601 of title 46 (including an inland waterway corridor, connector, or crossing) that are likely to reduce on-road mobile source emissions.*
- Projects must be ready to obligate the FFY 2022-2025 NHFP funding based upon delivery schedule submitted in the project submission form as a condition of the award.
- Project activities including preliminary engineering, right of way, and construction are eligible.
- Minimum of 13.5% non-federal match per phase is required for all eligible federal expenditures.
- Projects must comply with all federal and state requirements as detailed in the [Local Agency Guidelines Manual](#).
- Project proposals must clearly demonstrate how well it meets the project evaluation criteria⁴ with supporting data for justification.
- Projects must be included in a formally adopted plan or programming document, such as Regional Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), local comprehensive plan, or port district development plan.
- Project sponsor must complete and deliver the project if selected and funded.

³ 23 U.S.C. 167(i) (5)(B), and Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act §11114(3)(D)

⁴ See project submission instruction sheet and project scoring criteria posted at NHFP program website for details

Project submittal package and available resources

Regional submissions from MPOs and RTPOs must be returned by email to Wenjuan Zhao at wenjuan.zhao@wsdot.wa.gov no later than **March 16, 2022**. Electronic copies of the following are to be included in the submittal package:

- Completed MPO/RTPO cover sheet of project submittal package.
- Completed project submission form for each project contained in the cover sheet.
- Any other supporting documentation including project vicinity maps in pdf format.

These documents, as well as other related materials and resources are available on the [WSDOT NHFP program website](#) to assist MPOs, RTPOs, and project sponsors in preparing regional submissions, including project submission forms, instruction sheet, NHFP data map tool, NHFP program crash data request form, and project scoring criteria.

Project selection process and timeline

Between March and May 2022, WSDOT will conduct technical evaluation, information validation and initial/preliminary scoring of project proposals received. A project selection committee will be convened in spring 2022, and the committee will review and select projects in June 2022. Project selection results will be announced in summer 2022, with funding utilization contingent upon FHWA approval of the 2022 state freight investment plan.

Mileage limitation of Critical Urban and Rural Freight Corridors

As outlined in federal law, all projects receiving NHFP funding must contribute to the efficient movement of freight on the National Highway Freight Network. Critical Urban Freight Corridors (CUFC) and Critical Rural Freight Corridors (CRFC) are part of the NHFN network, and Washington state is limited to a total of 150 miles for CUFCs and 300 miles for CRFCs.

After the NHFP project selection process is completed, WSDOT will update the designation of Critical Urban and Rural Freight Corridors in coordination with MPOs and RTPOs. CUFC/CRFC mileage first will be allocated to projects selected for FFY 2022-2025 NHFP funding but not located on the existing NHFN network to ensure that NHFP funding can be authorized for those projects. For any remaining CUFC/CRFC mileage balance, WSDOT will work with MPOs and RTPOs to identify proposed corridors and update the corridor designation between June and July 2022. The final corridor designation will be submitted to FHWA for certification in August 2022.

How to get more information

Information on this process is available on the WSDOT NHFP program website:

<https://wsdot.wa.gov/construction-planning/statewide-plans/national-highway-freight-program>

An informational webinar will be held from 9:30 am to 11 am, 1/19 virtually via Go-to-webinar. The registration link is posted on the program webpage identified above.

Questions regarding this request for projects may be directed to:

Wenjuan Zhao
Multimodal Freight Systems Planning Engineer
Rail, Freight, and Ports Division
Washington State Department of Transportation
Wenjuan.Zhao@wsdot.wa.gov
Office: 360-705-6990